

The SYNOPSIS (1961) mentions that it wanders as far south as Madras and the HANDBOOK (5:181) records a report of a lone specimen from Madras, adding that the bird might perhaps be a cage bird. In the absence of any published date on its occurrence in Andhra this record adds Northern Andhra to its known range of distribution.

C/O PRINCIPAL,  
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September 6, 1974.

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#### 14. CURIOUS BEHAVIOUR OF A LOTEN'S SUNBIRD (*NECTARINIA LOTENIA*)

Early in the morning on 26 February, 1974, two or more nestlings of the Tailor Bird (*Orthotomus sutorius*) had left their nest in a small plant at the foot of a wall in the large open plot just north of our house in Trivandrum, Kerala State.

At 1115 hours, my wife, who combines her bird watching with her outdoor household jobs, noted a family of Tailor Birds on a small tamarind tree in our backyard and summoned me. There was one juvenile only and the parents were hopping about around it in some excitement and uttering an incessant *chit-chit-chit-tit-tit-tit* note.

Just then a male Loten's Sunbird in eclipse plumage came and began probing the juvenile Tailor Bird's vent with its long bill. The chick responded by begging for food. The sunbird not only pecked at and prodded the cloaca of the Tailor chick, but quite frequently pulled the latter's almost invisible stub-tail. At times the sunbird took hold of the chick's short primaries one at a time and tugged so hard that the chick had a hard time of retaining its hold on the perch. Strangely enough, the parents who were close by made no move to drive the sunbird away. Only when the sunbird withdrew some distance from the chick would one or the other parent Tailor fly at the sunbird.

The parents appeared to be trying to lead the chick to a more sheltered place. Our presence could also have had something to do with the reluctance of the parent birds to go too near their chick.

The harassed juvenile tried to escape the attentions of the sunbird by fluttering from one twig to another, but the sunbird was most persistent and as soon as the chick had settled down on a perch started probing, prodding and pecking again!

The Tailor Bird family sought refuge in a thickly foliated *Cassia fistula* which was a few yards away from the tamarind tree. Still the sunbird followed and began its antics again. Just then we noted an adult

Tailor Bird coaxing a second juvenile along our roof of the *Cassia*. Here the sunbird was still busy with juvenile No. 1 which had by then begun alternately to beg for food from and make sudden lunges at its tormentor. The sunbird occasionally sat above juvenile No. 1 and hung head down to poke the vent of the poor chick as though it were seeking nectar from a pendent flower.

Meanwhile a parent had fed juvenile No. 2 a few times. The sunbird now transferred its attentions to juvenile No. 2 which, however, was much more agile than No. 1 and kept jumping from twig to twig. The parents had meanwhile fed juvenile No. 1. The sunbird suddenly left juvenile No. 2 and returned to No. 1. The chick flew to a mango tree close by, with the sunbird in pursuit. One of the parents made a feeble and futile attempt to drive away the sunbird.

Unfortunately, neither my wife nor I could continue watching beyond 1150 hrs., but we noted that soon after we had gone in the *chit-chit-chit-tit-tit* notes of the parents ceased.

What could the sunbird have been after? Did it mistake the pink and red vent of the juvenile Tailor Bird for a flower and probe it, discovering in the process that some fluid exuded from it? Was that the reason for its persistent pursuit of the chick? Does any fluid ooze from the chick's vent? If so, does it increase in quantity soon after the chick is fed?

It will be interesting to know others have observed such behaviour on the part of a sunbird or any other bird.

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May 29, 1974.

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#### 15. WESTERNMOST RECORD OF THE SCARLET FINCH *HAEMATOSPIZA SIPAHI*

Reading through the tenth Volume of the HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN I find that the range of the Scarlet Finch *Haematospiza siphahi* has been given as "The Himalayas from Central Nepal.... east through Darjeeling.....". In the summer of 1957 our family had gone on a pilgrimage to Kedarnath and Badrinath in May. I had been walking ahead of our party and on the final climb up the valley to the shrine of Kedarnath, I scanned a cliff at a sharp turn in the track and my gaze was arrested by a brilliant scarlet bird perched in the morning sunlight on a sprig. Nearby was the dull less attractive female. I was in admirable position to take in all the characteristics and watched the birds for about twenty minutes. Having seen the bird illustrated in Gould's monumental work, THE BIRDS OF ASIA and having taken a close